

Mrs. Conner Tells Progress In P.O. Obscenity Battle

Postmaster Clara A. Conner reports that the Post Office department's drive to stamp out the activities of "merchants in filth" who solicit minor children for the mail-order sale of obscene materials is making substantial headway.

Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield, she states, is taking increasingly effective action against this growing nationwide racket.

Summerfield has notified the local postmaster that during the fiscal year which ended June 30, 1959, the Post Office department conducted more than 14,000 separate investigations of traffic in mail order obscenity, of which approximately 10,000 were based on complaints from parents aroused to the menace presented by "the vicious arrogance of the smut racketeers."

Actual arrests during the year, according to Postmaster Conner, totaled 315, a significant increase over the previous year, and almost double the number of arrests during 1957, when the department was still hampered by inadequate enforcement legislation.

Prior to the summer of 1958, antiquated laws and liberal court interpretations—Summerfield prefers to call them "misinterpretations"—required that even the most blatant profiteer, sending the vilest possible material through the mails to school-age children, could be prosecuted only at the point of origin of the mail, usually New York or Los Angeles.

According to Mrs. Conner the "liberal" courts in these cities established a definition of "obscenity" far different from views held by the majority in most normal American communities.

In 1958 the Postmaster General recommended new legislation to the 85th Congress, which would permit prosecution of such racketeers at the point where the mail was received, and where the actual attempt to corrupt children's moral and social health took place. Congress promptly responded to the Postmaster General's plea, and translated the recommendation into law.

The Torrance postmaster reports that this new legislation is now beginning to bear fruit. The first case prosecuted under the new law was of a man and his wife on the West Coast, who were mailing obscene literature to youngsters in Boise, Idaho.

Thanks to the new law, these two were convicted in Boise, and sentenced to 10 years behind bars plus a heavy fine.

In another recent California case, a 10-year prison sentence was imposed on a criminal offender convicted of sending obscene material through the mail, in contrast to so many previous cases in that area when probation had been granted.

Postmaster General Summerfield pointed out in a recent speech: "This represents, in our opinion, real progress of the type which can readily be expanded, so long as we have determined public support,

prompt and positive investigation, and vigorous prosecution."

Mrs. Connors states that the postmaster general and the Post Office Department attribute this progress to the broad support for the campaign being given by the nation's newspapers and radio and television commentators, public spirited civic organizations, members of Congress, and more and more individual citizens.

Their efforts, according to the Postmaster General, are not only alerting the public but are arousing judges and law enforcement officers to act firmly against the menace this traffic in filth presents to the healthy and decent development of the nation's youth.

Church Trip to Hollywood Hills

Fifty-three persons from Alondra Park Methodist Church will board a specially chartered bus on Saturday evening to journey to the Hollywood Hills. There they will see the famed "Pilgrimage Play" which depicts the life of Christ. Arrangements have been made under the Commission on Membership and Evangelism, Mrs. Frank Gist, chairman.

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